

IBM Cognos solutions for SAP® technologies

Unlocking hidden value from investments in your SAP NetWeaver® technology platform



Preface

The architecture, capabilities and value of IBM Cognos® software for SAP® technologies is centered on embracing existing skills, knowledge, work and investments, and on enhancing existing SAP resources while reducing IT backlogs and extending the capabilities and value of SAP NetWeaver® Business Warehouse (SAP NetWeaver BW).

Customers choose Cognos software to enhance SAP investments based on its tight integration and interoperability with SAP NetWeaver BW. Cognos software delivers an industry-leading performance management platform based on a consistent and modern architecture, innovative technology developed specifically for SAP NetWeaver BW and unique performance management knowledge and expertise.

Organizations that have made strategic investments in SAP technology do so with expectations of tangible returns. In the case of SAP NetWeaver BW, it is typical for investments to be made in technology (software and hardware), skills, knowledge, training and data migration, as well as in process, governance and administration. Given the breadth of expense and the nature of the investment, using Cognos software to unlock hidden value from SAP NetWeaver BW can be realized in the form of:

1. Improved utilization of SAP data
2. Broader user reach and frequency of access
3. Reduction in stranded spreadsheets and ad-hoc data marts
4. Fact-based decision making using trusted data from SAP NetWeaver BW
5. Extending existing SAP skills, knowledge and expertise while reducing IT backlogs

Without the value of Cognos software, investments in SAP NetWeaver BW can result in stranded data, limited business access, proliferation of custom spreadsheets, excessive focus on gathering data and arguing over numbers. In addition, many customers find SAP talent is squandered on low-value tasks such as creation of rudimentary reports and other performance management content.

The purpose of this paper is to outline how Cognos software and solutions are best suited to drive maximum value from investments in SAP NetWeaver BW. This topic is of interest to business and IT executives as well as SAP solution managers and project managers who are seeking guidance on the value Cognos software generates for investments in SAP technology.

IBM Cognos 10: Intelligence Unleashed Smarter Decisions. Better Results

Cognos 10 delivers a revolutionary new user experience and expands traditional business intelligence (BI) with planning, scenario modeling, real-time monitoring and predictive analytics. With the ability to interact, search and assemble all perspectives of your business, Cognos 10 provides a limitless BI workspace to support how people think and work.

Cognos 10 enables organizations to outperform by providing:

- **Analytics** that everyone can use in a BI workspace that sharpens individual skills to answer key business questions
- **Collective intelligence** with built-in collaboration and social networking to connect people and insights to gain alignment
- **Actionable insight** everywhere in mobile, real-time and business processes to instantly respond at the point of impact

Built on a proven technology platform, Cognos 10 is designed to upgrade seamlessly and to cost-effectively scale for the broadest of deployments. Cognos 10 provides you and your organization the freedom to see more, do more—and make the smart decisions that drive better business results.

Common detractions from investments in the SAP NetWeaver technology platform

SAP customers face common and inherent challenges with respect to generating value from their investment in SAP NetWeaver. These challenges generally comprise several, if not all, of the following:

1. Accessing data from SAP NetWeaver BW requires the intervention of specialized IT resources and is generally a time-intensive activity that is contrary to the need for prompt business access to information. As such, business decision-making and general responsiveness is a function of available IT bandwidth and relative priorities, and not the urgency of the business need at hand.
2. To serve growing needs of the business for performance management content, scarce IT talent is frequently misaligned to lower-value activities such as remodeling data, creating, updating and managing reports, and creating custom one-off dashboards or planning applications. Duplication, re-work and force fit of existing content to address changing business needs is also a common reality. The impact of these two realities is additional, and often unplanned, time and money, in terms of both real measures and lost opportunity costs. As a result, other projects are delayed and addressing the need for performance management content becomes a complex function of resource bandwidth and relative priorities. Often strategic SAP solutions and other IT projects are drained of needed bench strength and expertise.

3. Creation of comprehensive performance management content (for example: integrated reports, dashboards, scorecards, analysis and plans) is a complex and inefficient exercise. This is usually caused by disjointed products that lack seamless integration and interoperability and have inconsistent interfaces and varying capabilities. They require specialized IT skills and have limited-to-no breadth of business self-service. This situation results in custom development, numerous work-arounds, duplication of data, longer implementation cycles, user frustration and poor adoption.
4. Without a holistic approach to performance management, utilizing data from SAP NetWeaver BW with other SAP or non-SAP data sources can be a complex function of:
 - a. Navigating through the inherent limitations of multiple disparate and disjointed reporting, dashboarding, planning and other tools. For example, inconsistencies for support of various corporate data sources can necessitate extraction / migration of data and/or other workarounds.
 - b. Availability of specialized IT resources to model, migrate and manage SAP and non-SAP data into a common format that works with existing tools.
 - c. The dynamic nature of changing business needs which demand agility, flexibility and consistent access to timely and accurate information even under changing business conditions.
5. Implementation of SAP NetWeaver BW commonly involves the creation of multiple InfoProviders and InfoQueries and the use of variables, hierarchies, security and business rules as well the existence of multiple instances and versions of SAP NetWeaver BW. This typically results in a mandate to ensure ongoing value is generated from all the above while minimizing stranded work, knowledge and expertise.

For many organizations, SAP's Business Explorer (BEx) tool has been shown to address a portion of business needs. However, BEx is not effective at data access beyond the SAP NetWeaver technology platform, nor proven to seamlessly interoperate with other performance management capabilities, such as dashboards, scorecards, plans and forecasts, and it often requires intensive end-user training.

6. The ability to broadly scale access to and use of data within SAP NetWeaver BW can be constrained, given an ongoing need for end-user training on disparate tools and a lack of available IT bandwidth to generate / customize content. In short, the lack of a consistent and comprehensive self-service access model for content creation, modification and access can constrain the ability of an organization to extend access to a growing user population.
7. Ensuring flexibility for employees to consume performance management content using data from SAP NetWeaver BW and other SAP and non-SAP sources. Organizations can provide content in a format and manner users are comfortable with while enabling innovative use of technologies such as mobile devices and search capabilities without the need for specialized IT resources to re-author or re-work data or content.
8. Creation and execution of a deliverable vision for comprehensive enterprise performance management, to which SAP NetWeaver BW is a key strategic component, is constrained given point solutions that are not integrated. Further, there tends to be a rationale perspective of uncertainty associated with the current ERP and performance management roadmap. Customers raise concerns over current challenges with integration, interoperability and functionality gaps, and many customers perceive a tangible probability of being unable to address current or future business needs.

9. False perceptions of misalignment between the needs of the business for prompt access to relevant information and the ability of IT to deliver ongoing value. The inability to dispel misperceptions, given all the challenges listed above, can result in stalled projects, poor adoption and less-than-successful performance management initiatives. Although not an exhaustive list, these items are the most common in terms of their impact on restraining the creation of value from investments in the SAP NetWeaver platform. The remainder of the paper will outline how this hidden value can be captured using Cognos software to embrace, enhance and extend your investment in SAP NetWeaver.

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Create higher returns from your investment in the SAP NetWeaver technology platform

Enhance the inherent value of SAP Netweaver BW data

Data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW is clearly of current and potential value. However, all value is not truly realized unless a predictable and efficient access path is provided and

the relevance and context of the data aligns with business needs. In short, superior investment returns can be generated from data residing in SAP NetWeaver BW through initiatives which improve the:

- Efficiency for accessing data
- Overall effectiveness of the data

With Cognos software, improving the efficiency of access and use of data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW is based on:

1. A common user experience for all performance management capabilities, including the provisioning of access to all BI, planning and performance management capabilities through a single unified performance management platform. A unified platform reduces the need for excessive end-user training, provides predictable and scalable growth to address the needs of enterprise-wide initiatives, enhances the distribution and dissemination of timely and relevant content, reduces duplication of data modeling, minimizes administration and management costs, and simplifies and incents user adoption.
2. Minimizing the involvement of specialized IT skills while leveraging existing SAP NetWeaver BW practices, processes and investments. Cognos software provides a next-generation, patented, SAP-certified interface with SAP NetWeaver BW. Customers are able to extend existing InfoQueries, business rules, security, hierarchies and variables as well as access all InfoProviders and other structures consistently across performance management capabilities—with optimized performance.

3. Self-service content creation, including on-the-fly and ad-hoc content customization across all performance management capabilities made possible through a common view of content, plans and report specifications. Business users are provided the unique flexibility to quickly change content and context without redevelopment effort and pleading for IT assistance. The results are Cognos software reducing IT backlogs and accelerating decision making while increasing the use of data from SAP NetWeaver BW.

Capabilities that are unique to Cognos software also drive greater effectiveness from data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW. The all-too-common challenge of ensuring that information is complete, reliable, timely and trusted is enabled by ensuring:

1. All relevant sources and context can be used as data inputs.
2. Data is factual, error free and not subject to spreadsheet customization or multiple interpretations.
3. Information is readily available and not impacted by access delays.
4. The data comes from a reliable source based on IT governance and security practices.

Cognos software is unique in its ability to readily combine SAP and non-SAP data and then utilize all data consistently across all performance management capabilities. This capability ensures complete information, decision context and reliability for business users. The solution can combine SAP and non-SAP data, and transactional, warehoused, relational and OLAP as well as modern and ad-hoc sources through a single and trusted semantic layer that enables data to be modeled once yet used everywhere.

This capability avoids the need for migrating, transforming or modifying source data to fit with the tool or use case at hand, and it therefore reduces the need for ongoing IT involvement and enhances and enables decision effectiveness for business users.

Specifically, since business context and demands are frequently changing, Cognos software provides access to and use of all forms of information by readily blending all corporate data. The value of data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW is enhanced through, context-aware decision-making, planning and analysis. With Cognos software, the ongoing IT burden and growing request backlog is avoided. Content and data rework as well as duplication of effort associated with point products becomes unnecessary.

In summary, Cognos software can enhance the value of data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW by adding the perspective and context needed to create information synergies from all data sources. Customers find greater insights and superior fact-based decision-making given:

- The ability to readily utilize both SAP and non-SAP data sources
- The use of a single semantic layer across all performance management capabilities, which reduces data complexities for IT and hides source-specific data complexities for business users
- Agnostic user access to SAP and non-SAP data sources provided through a unified performance management platform

Increase accessibility to SAP NetWeaver data

Where business users are consistently unable to access reliable and timely information, a predictable path of least resistance evolves. Disparate and unmanaged “spreadsheet marts” and special one-off reports lacking context and/or perspectives on information become the norm. Although the intent of generating data to drive decisions is noble, the common result is a decentralized and ungoverned data reporting and analysis approach. In addition, the value of data is degraded, and excessive time is spent reconciling and rationalizing multiple data points, viewpoints and perspectives.

Further, the existence of one-or-more implementations of the SAP NetWeaver technology platform does not provide SAP customers with a guarantee of immunity from the all-to-common reality outlined above. In fact, in many cases data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW can compound this problem where:

- SAP transaction systems generate strategic data and information.
- A large volume of historical and transaction data resides within SAP NetWeaver BW.
- Existing tools such as BEx do not address the majority of business user needs.
- Demand for data from SAP NetWeaver BW exceeds the delivery capacity of existing IT resources.

As overlapping and uncontrolled reports, spreadsheets and custom applications are developed to fill a perceived information gap, over a period of time employees develop a lack of trust in information. Often unknowingly, incorrect information is relied upon; decision-cycle times are elongated as more time is invested in arguing the numbers instead of agreeing on facts and making executing decisions. Simply providing more users with a view to data within SAP NetWeaver BW can be a myopic and problematic approach to capturing additional value.

Using Cognos software, SAP customers are able to generate a net gain in value from investments in SAP NetWeaver by increasing data access and driving decisions and actions based on consistent fact and reliable information by:

1. **Extending time and effort invested in IT best practices** involving SAP NetWeaver security (authorization and authentication), data governance (centralized change management) and business rules (filters, hierarchies and variables). This is accomplished by embracing the capabilities of all structures and InfoQueries that reside within SAP NetWeaver BW. A consistent semantic layer enables scalable enterprise access, avoids extraction of SAP NetWeaver BW data into spreadsheets or custom data marts and leverages existing SAP IT skills. The results are reductions in IT backlogs and business users focused on decision making rather than data gathering; all with the use of centralized and governed data that is both secure and trusted.

2. Enabling scalable enterprise access, all through a consistent user interface supported by a single semantic layer, to data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW or elsewhere. Cognos software leveraging a proven, open and unified platform, which enables business users to access the information they need through a web browser, mobile devices, Microsoft® Office and search engines such as Google or IBM OmniFind™. As a result, specialized IT skills are no longer drained and responsiveness increases as business users directly interact with accessible, trusted, reusable and easily customized BI and performance management content.

3. Providing consistent, proven and seamless integration and interoperability across all performance management capabilities. Cognos software delivers value to SAP IT teams by avoiding the data source dependencies and custom development associated with disparate point products. Business users are provided with a consistent browser-based interface and the ability to seamlessly transition between performance management capabilities without having to navigate around data source limitations and a lack of true interoperability between reporting, dashboarding, scorecarding, analysis, planning and forecasting capabilities.

Improve information delivery and usability

As broad access to data within SAP NetWeaver is facilitated, a common challenge is how to deal with the inevitable challenge of a growing library of performance management information and gain the ability to:

- Provide on-demand access to the right information as it is needed

- Enable business users to subscribe to and customize the push of information
- Digest information in a format business users are comfortable with

With Cognos software, business users are able to save content in pre-defined or custom-defined folders. Information and content can be readily organized into summary dashboards that contain reports, scorecards, event notifications, plans and other performance management content.

More than just a collection of images on a web page, business users have complete flexibility to customize the content they need, all through a web browser and with seamless interoperability across all performance management capabilities.

In addition, Cognos software can push subscribed content via email broadcast and provide automated alerts based on user-defined business changes (e.g. “if daily sales in region x drop by 5% then let me know”). Business users are able to create, manage and update their own alerts and receive change notifications via email or through a content dashboard, or they can have an alert output automatically published to a supported mobile device.

By seamlessly delivering trusted content to the Microsoft Office environment without the need for re-authoring, Cognos software enables business users to readily include charts, reports, dashboards, scorecards and other pre-built content within Microsoft Word, Excel® and PowerPoint® documents.

Content created in Cognos software that uses data from SAP NetWeaver—such as financial reports, sales dashboards, call center scorecards and other content—is quickly imported and is based on security settings defined within SAP NetWeaver BW. Within minutes, quarterly sales figures or any content driven by data from SAP NetWeaver BW can be updated without the need for tasking SAP software-specialized IT resources.

Extend existing SAP skills, knowledge and expertise

For most customers, the implementation of SAP NetWeaver BW reached beyond purchasing software. Time and money has been invested in IT and end-user training, creation of intellectual property such as BEx InfoQueries, custom information structures, security, business rules and filters, system administration and more. Understandably, given the uncertainty of the SAP technology roadmap, many customers express concern over these investments being stranded, prematurely shelved and/or unsupported over time. Clearly, such an occurrence would detract from the promise of future value from SAP NetWeaver.

Further, most SAP customers are seeking a consistent and ongoing flow of value from SAP NetWeaver. Issues such as requisite product limitations, a lack of consistent support for all data structures and an inability to seamlessly transition from a report to a dashboard to a plan and back put undue pressure on specialized and scarce SAP IT resources to come up with workarounds. Inevitably, functionality compromises results, and the true value of an investment in SAP NetWeaver is squandered.

In lieu of risking your investments in capital, knowledge, expertise and work, Cognos software provides a mature, next-generation, patented and proven integration with SAP NetWeaver BW. Investment in BEx InfoQueries, business rules, filters, multiple currencies and languages as well as all data structures and investments in training and administration are embraced and extended across all performance management capabilities.

Reduce ongoing reliance on SAP-specialized resources

At a high level, investments in SAP® ERP applications are typically characterized by a model of defining business process, modeling the process, instantiating the process within the SAP technology environment and deploying the requisite software / user interface into production. In short, automating the vast majority of business processes in SAP applications is the result of static process predictability. Through external expertise, building an internal competency or through a blend of both, SAP-specialized IT professionals are a pre-requisite for success.

The fact is, given the success of SAP applications in the ERP market and the scope of the projects within your organization, the demand for SAP software talent is not always balanced with supply. Many customers view the effective alignment of SAP-specialized resources as a strategic imperative to:

- Ensure immediacy of value in their ERP investment.
- Maintain a level of predictability in IT budgets.
- Effectively address business needs.

Although the implementation and maintenance of SAP NetWeaver does require the time and attention of SAP professionals, customers that use Cognos software find they are able to defend their SAP IT talent pool from being drained even as they realize greater value from their investment.

As the result of a single, proven performance management platform that delivers all capabilities through a consistent interface, Cognos customers are able to embrace a level of business user self-service that yields the following value:

1. Business users can access all data across multiple instances and versions of SAP NetWeaver BW.
2. All performance management capabilities are available to the business user.
3. Access to the data with SAP NetWeaver BW can be defined using pre-defined SAP security parameters.
4. SAP IT professionals are not a mandatory prerequisite to create, administer and update reports, dashboards, planning models and other content.
5. Business users are able to customize content on-the-fly without IT intervention.

Tangible SAP NetWeaver platform ROI

This paper has outlined five initiatives your organization can undertake with Cognos software to generate higher return from SAP NetWeaver and:

1. Enhance the inherent value of data.
2. Increase user accessibility to the data.
3. Improve information delivery, performance and usability.
4. Extend existing SAP software skills, knowledge and expertise.
5. Reduce reliance on SAP-specialized resources.

Although specific measures will vary by customer, a general observation of the value of Cognos software to SAP customers includes:

- **Lower costs and faster decision cycles** as business executives and everyday users access, create and customize BI and planning content without ongoing reliance on specialized SAP IT resources
- **Flexibility** to utilize all corporate information without dependencies on underlying data, applications and infrastructure

- **Decision-making agility** as custom coding and application development is replaced with on-the-fly creation, modification and changes to reports, plans, financial models and data sources
- **Proven capabilities** and predictable results from Cognos performance management focus, customer success and SAP solution expertise
- **Comprehensive solutions**, since all performance management capabilities are unified within a single SOA platform, and Cognos software enables reliable, consistent content as well as lower administration and training costs

In addition, Cognos software reduces the likelihood of professional misdemeanors resulting from investments in SAP skills, infrastructure and expertise being squandered. Failed or misaligned projects are a probable output where business requirements are subordinated to the necessity of waiting on a solution roadmap. Instead, it is important to focus not only on where your vendor's solution is headed but its lineage, current capabilities and alignment with current needs, as well as the relative priority of current needs in the context of business demands. It is in this broad context that an effective investment decision can be made, and one where personal professional risk is minimized.

In taking this approach, one can build a clear determination of the value of Cognos software in terms of offsetting the risks associated with the SAP technology roadmap that is intended to address given:

- Functionality gaps
- Poor interoperability
- The need for future migration and re-work
- Redundant, overlapping tools and incomplete integration
- Unclear and unproven direction on where to start given over 29 disparate tools
- The need for custom development to address current needs
- Maintenance fees without options for future innovation

All which can result in:

- Lack of seamless integration and interoperability
- Needless IT burdens and the cost of supporting multiple tools, user training and future migration
- Hidden costs, such as limitations, restrictions and caveats on performance management initiatives
- The inability to realize the complete and inherent value of data residing within SAP NetWeaver BW and all SAP and non-SAP data sources
- Business and user frustration
- Professional risk



About IBM Business Analytics

IBM Business Analytics software delivers complete, consistent and accurate information that decision-makers trust to improve business performance. A comprehensive portfolio of business intelligence, advanced analytics, financial performance and strategy management and analytic applications gives you clear, immediate and actionable insights into current performance and the ability to predict future outcomes.

Combined with rich industry solutions, proven practices and professional services, organizations of every size can drive the highest IT productivity and deliver better results.

For more information

For additional information on how IBM can help you embrace, enhance and extend your investment in the SAP NetWeaver technology platform, please visit: ibm.com/cognos/sap or contact your IBM Account Representative.

Request a call

To request a call or to ask a question, go to ibm.com/cognos/contactus.

An IBM Cognos representative will respond to your enquiry within two business days.

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